POLICY PAPER

DEFENDING
FREEDOM

Investing in Deterrence

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ANALYSIS

Imprint

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1. Introduction

Wars devour enormous resources, destroy human lives and quickly plunge open liberal societies into internal turmoil. The whole idea of democracy, its appeal and its prosperity rest precisely on the absence of war. Nonetheless are violent conflict and war a reality in today's geopolitics inasmuch as they have for centuries, and democratic states or those aspiring to be are confronted with them. As states compete for resources, legitimacy and space, defending territory becomes paramount – again. Instead of focusing on international crisis management as they have for the past thirty years, Germany and Europe are once again directing their military towards national and alliance defence. The Russian war on Ukraine raging since February 2022 demonstrates the need to seriously invest in defence and shows how fundamentally different the self-conception of authoritarian and democratic regimes are – imperialism and greed for power and control versus a vigorous pacifism leaning to complacency, if looking at the European model of democracy of the last thirty years.

One vital element of Cold War military strategies was nuclear deterrence. With the end of the Cold War, nuclear deterrence became less important. Now, war reappeared in Europe, and with it, military strategies, concepts and even tactics are vigorously entering the public debate. In most Western European countries, defence has been grossly underfunded for decades and rarely treated as beneficial public knowledge. Deterrence, and nuclear deterrence in particular, is one such concept – and its history and function often highly underestimated. Deterrence does not need to end up in an arms race, as often assumed, but instead may serve as a concept democratic states use effectively to defend themselves and the values they stand for. If the war against Ukraine has proven one thing, it is that the democratic definition of freedom and participation is not to be taken for granted and needs defending.

2. Investing in Deterrence

For Europe, the transatlantic security alliance NATO forms the bedrock of security. Within NATO, European integration of security and defence, i.e. defence investment, technology development, or joint exercises, plays an increasingly important role. In the last thirty years, German and European security policy has mainly focused on participation in international crisis management missions, for example in Kosovo, Lebanon, Mali, South Sudan or the Mediterranean. As the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine continues and the rhetoric aggravates, European countries and NATO are refocusing their efforts on territorial defence and deterrence. However, in Germany, the public debate still revolves primarily around individual arms equipment and increased defence spending. A truly strategic debate on the newly recognised security situation in Europe is still lagging behind.

It is compelling to draw parallels to the Cold War and the East-West dichotomy. Geopolitical dynamics have changed, however, and new powers emerged. This complicates security policy and certainly adds complexity to deterrence.

In order to bolster security in Europe, NATO and national defence planners are urging higher investments in defence capabilities and in deterrence. While this goal was already formulated at the NATO summit in Wales in 2014, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine since February 2022 has added urgency to this pledge, which is reflected in national defence budgets already. In Germany, for example, a special budget of 100 billion euros has been approved for the armed forces, and Poland has introduced a similar special budget for the modernisation of its armed forces. Poland, Norway, Latvia and Estonia have each significantly increased their defence budgets, and many other European countries have at least recommitted to the NATO 2 percent target, including Italy and Spain.[1] For Germany, the 100 billion euros in special assets are an important start, even if, given the current state of the armed forces, only a homeopathic sum.

In essence, investing in deterrence is a means of ensuring peace and security. Deterrence is a military strategy sought to pre-empt an attack by another party.

It is based on the assumption that the intention to attack is real and that an attack can be prevented through a rational cost-benefit analysis.

1.1 Why Deterrence? A historical outline and its importance today

The post-World War II security architecture in Europe

The 20th century has witnessed two World Wars and a Cold War accompanied with a number of proxy wars as well as the dropping of two nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively. An estimated fifteen million people lost their lives in World War I, sixty million people were killed in World War II, or around eighty million, including the Holocaust, the genocide of Romani people, other war crimes and consequences of war.[2] It is not by chance that the United Nations (UN) was formed, primarily to provide for a lasting peace and security order, in order to *"save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, […]"*[3]. The UN was sought to form the bedrock of a new, rules-based world order. With the UN Charter, six main organs were established, including the Security Council whose decisions, unlike from all other bodies, are binding to all 193 member states. According to Article 24 (1) of the UN Charter, the Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and may even impose sanctions or authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.[4] Given today's geopolitical environment, the fact that Russia and China are two of the five permanent members in the Security Council with the power to veto any decision that might impact their own interests has proven inadequacies in the system. To ensure a functioning rule-based order, a reform of the Security Council seems inevitable. From a security political perspective, this would be crucial, albeit a discussion separate to this discussion.

Most important and to this day prevalent organization for security and stability in Europe is NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Building on the UN Charter, NATO was established in 1949 after the Berlin Blockade in April 1948 – arguably the first major crisis of the Cold War – and the coup in Czechoslovakia a few months later, toppling the heretofore-democratic government in favour of a communist ruling, aggravated the security concerns of Western countries. Ten European and two North Atlantic countries thus created NATO, to *"unite their efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security"*.[5] Seven years later, in May 1955, eight parties, including the German Democratic Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, formed the Warsaw Pact[6] another solidification of the hardened fronts between

1   See EDINA European Defence in a New Age, p. 9f.
2   See O'Neill, Aaron. „Number of Military and Civilian Fatalities during the First World War, per Country or World Power, between 1914 and 1918." Statista. June 21, 2022.
     https://www.statista.com/statistics/1208625/first-world-war-fatalities-per-country/; and
     O'Neill, Aaron. „Second World War: Fatalities per Country 1939-1945." Statista. August 18, 2022. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1293510/second-world-war-fatalities-per-country/.
3   United Nations Charter: Preamble. 1945.
4   See UN Security Council, https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/. Accessed 01.12.2022.
5   Preamble of the North Atlantic Treaty, 04.04.1949.
6   See Warsaw Pact Treaty, 14.05.1945, Wilson Center Digital Archive. https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/warsaw-pact-treaty, Accessed 01.12.2022.

the Eastern and the Western bloc of the Cold War. For more than three and a half decades, the two military organizations NATO and the Warsaw Pact, led by the United States and the Soviet Union respectively, dominated the security architecture in Europe. In 1975, in an attempt to counter the arms race between the two powers that became increasingly difficult to manage, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) was established. As a platform for dialogue on disarmament and demilitarization, the CSCE was initiated by a Soviet proposal and was joined by the United States and numerous European states. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the end of the Cold War, the Western Allies decided to remain the military coordination and collective organization through NATO, adapting its mandate to a new threat landscape.[7] The CSCE also remained intact and was further developed and institutionalized into the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe), to provide security from 'Vancouver to Vladivostok'. Today, with 57 member states, it is the largest regional security organization. However, despite its value as a platform for consultation and negotiations for its participating states, in promoting arms control and military transparency as well as providing oversight and furthering democracy, the OSCE has no legal powers and is limited in resources.[8] The OSCE is facing the greatest upheaval since the beginning of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, with the outcome still uncertain. Russia's blockade policy towards, among others, the OSCE missions in Ukraine as well as the imprisonment of OSCE staff on the ground are forcing the organisation to look for other ways to support Ukraine.[9] The Russian blockade in the OSCE budget vote and the decision on the OSCE Chairmanship 2024 are probably the biggest hurdle the organisation currently has to take.[10]

Deterrence – then and now

From the onset, deterrence in the context of NATO was built on the concept of inferiority and superiority in terms of conventional military might and nuclear weapons. At the time of its inception, most Western military planners were convinced of the conventional military inferiority of NATO compared to the Soviet Union and its partners. To balance this security gap, NATO strategy considered the use of US nuclear capabilities to defend its territory paramount. Underlying assumption of the early idea of building a credible deterrence was that the Soviet Union's objective was to defeat NATO forces and expand its influence to the Atlantic coast, the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Key objective therefore was to convince the Soviet Union that war was A) costly and B) unsuccessful.[11]

This included planning for conventional military countering as well as threatening of greater measures such as the use of *"strategic bombing [...] by all means"*[12], i.e. a nuclear strike.

The 1950s' strategic concepts of NATO and concomitant policy directives indicate that the nuclear aspect in deterrence was a major focus, not least because a full-scale military build-up to match Soviet conventional forces was not considered maintainable towards the NATO population, which would not support a continued high level of defence spending. With the development of nuclear capabilities in the Soviet Union, nuclear deterrence and the competition for superiority led to the MAD (*Mutually Assured Destruction*) doctrine, an abbreviation that reflected the severity and insanity of the power behind the nuclear weapon arsenal of both countries. At the same time, after the Cuban Missile crisis in 1962, the non-nuclear posture of NATO was to be further developed, recognizing that a devastating nuclear escalation was probable once a nuclear capability was used, tactical or strategic.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the classic juxtaposition of friend and foe became redundant. The threat landscape changed to include terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other sources of instability from within, caused by social or economic factors. While nuclear deterrence continued to play a vital role, it did so to lesser extent. At the same time, the role of confidence building measures and transparency as provided through arms control treaties was further highlighted. Consequentially, deterrence and classic territorial defence took an almost thirty-year backseat. Today, both are experiencing a revival of sorts:

In February and March 2014, Russian Armed Forces invaded and subsequently annexed the Ukrainian peninsular Crimea. Armed conflict has been flaring in the Donbass region ever since.

On February 24, 2022, the Russian government ordered a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The Russian war against Ukraine with the declared purpose of defeat and annihilation is since ongoing.

Other examples of sovereignty violations across the globe, be it through armed conflict, psychological warfare or cyber, are plentiful. Geographically further to Europe, yet priority to its most important security partner, US American foreign policy focuses on China and Taiwan. No military conflict has erupted yet, but analysts suggest that an armed annexation of Taiwan by mainland China is increasingly probable.[13]

Despite many differences between these two conflicts, the

7   See „The Alliance's New Strategic Concept (1991)." North Atlantic Treaty Organization. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, November 8, 1991.
    https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_23847.htm.
8   European Parliament, Briefing, The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE): A pillar of the European security order
    https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/696190/EPRS_BRI(2021)696190_EN.pdf
9   See Ministry of Foreign Affairs Germany. 01.12.2022. 2022 war ein schwieriges Jahr für die OSZE: Wie die Organisation mit der russischen Blockadepolitik umgeht und warum es sich
    lohnt, die Arbeit der OSZE zu unterstützen. https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/sicherheitspolitik/-/2565858. Accessed 28.02.2023.
10 See Liechtenstein, Stephanie. 29.11.2022, „Will Russia Kill The OSCE?" https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/11/29/osce-russia-putin-armenia-azerbaijan/. Accessed 28.02.2023.
11 See Pedlow, Gregory W. "NATO Strategy Documents 1949-1969." Research Gate. NATO, 1997.
    https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280287417_NATO_Strategy_Documents_1949-1969, p. XIf.
12 Ibid. p. XIII.
13 For a further read see Valenti, Dr. Alix. 2022. "Indo-Pacific. Threats, security and cooperation." Policy Paper based on the findings of the Indo-Pacific Conference, 5 September 2022.
    file:///C:/Users/wintert/Downloads/2022_PP_IndoPazifikKonferenz_en_web_final.pdf. and
    Jyun-yi Lee, Jyh-Shyang Sheu, Christina Chen, 02.2023. "The Rise of China? An Analysis from Taiwan". https://shop.freiheit.org/#!/Publikation/1431.

core question remains the same: How to defend a democracy against territorial and systemic claims by a bigger – autocratic – regime?

This, essentially, is the answer to the question *Why Deterrence:* democracies need a credible deterrence in order to defend themselves and their allies [14] They must cooperate more closely in foreign and security policy, restructure their armed forces towards joint deterrence and territorial defence without abruptly neglecting international crisis management, and strengthen societal resilience to hybrid threats.

Democracies are particularly vulnerable to external threats, as means of defence and the deployment of the military are politically bound and closely tied to national constitutions. As in the case of Germany, parliamentary control over the deployment, size and equipment of the Armed Forces adds bureaucracy and time to decision-making. The distribution of resources is highly competitive and the public interest in the Armed Forces – also owed to a lack of a *strategic culture*[15] – rudimentary at best. With that, the debate about whether or not to invest in the Armed Forces is dependent on the commitment and conviction of the respective elected Parliamentarians. Regular briefings on security environment and threat perception by the responsible government bodies – intelligence service, Ministry of Defence, Armed Forces – aside, budgetary decisions, arguably, are not solely based on threat analysis but political interests, especially in times of peace. Now, as Russia continues its full-scale war on Ukraine, democracies in Europe and the transatlantic alliance need to rapidly adapt a new security thinking while still catering to their public's needs in other areas. The necessity to invest nationally in security and to providing military support to Ukraine – sending weapons, providing intelligence, or other forms of monetary and organizational support – runs parallel with the urgent reorganization of energy supplies, let alone the severance of other trade relations with the Russian government. Every budgetary decision needs thorough explaining, and especially the invest in the military needs defending against long-fostered pacifist naivety.

On the contrary, autocratic regimes or those with respective tendencies benefit – in terms of military power und assertiveness – from a concentration of powers and control over public opinion. Power projection is often utilized as a source for legitimacy and, depending on the context, prioritization of resource allocation toward the military more readily accepted by the public.

The Russian war against Ukraine blatantly demonstrates why European countries, Germany leading the way, need to invest in their deterrence: in military capabilities as much as in measurable and unambiguous sanction packages. China's overt aggression toward Taiwan, too, shows that democracies worldwide explicitly need a common defence strategy against external aggression.

Entering war is inconceivable for most democratic states and most certainly unimaginable for any European country. Thus, preventing conflict and war while unequivocally protecting shared democratic values is paramount. This is precisely where deterrence comes in – and the deterrence of democratic states needs a well-structured multilateralism[16], actionable defence strategies and a strong strategic culture. Most importantly, a European deterrence needs to clearly identify threat and actors and develop a targeted security strategy. Whilst for decades, deterrence theory has centred on the United States as the epitome for deterrence posture and technology development, it is about time to develop and invest in a European spin.

1.2 What – exactly – is deterrence? Conventional deterrence, nuclear deterrence and resilience

Deterrence aims to discourage aggressive behaviour of one state – an attack or violent conflict – by threatening significant punishment. Deterrence can be imminent, through **denia**l, or **deferred**, through the threat of serious retaliation. An example of denial would be to deploy military force to defeat an invasion, the classic case of conventional deterrence. The cost of an attack is unambiguous and the effect is simply to put the opponent's objective – attacking – out of reach. Deterrence through the threat of retaliation on the other hand is less tangible and depends heavily on the credibility of the willingness to implement said threat. Significant retaliation could be the imposing of economic sanctions or, most prominently, the threatening of nuclear escalation.

Deterrence is widely discussed as a controversial and inconclusive strategy. Academics distinguish between different waves of deterrence throughout the Cold War era and almost exclusively, deterrence theory is linked to US foreign policy.[17] Few contest the differentiation between conventional and nuclear deterrence, though the beginning of the 21st century has also brought new concepts of cyber deterrence, space deterrence or, more broadly, collective actor deterrence – which all serve the same purpose, namely discouraging external aggression.

Three dimensions of deterrence are paramount and feed into all other conceptual attempts to adapt deterrence to emerging threats: **conventional deterrence** (direct defence),

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14 For a comprehensive read on opportunities for cooperation and alliances for democracy read Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger, Sabine, Paqué, Karl-Heinz Prof. Dr., Link, Michael, Vogel, Johannes, Gohl, Christopher Dr., Lissowsky, Michaela Dr., Riedel, Ann Cathrin, Hilgers, Sven, and Theresa C. Winter. „ALLIANZEN FÜR DEMOKRATIE. Liberale Ansätze für den neuen Systemwettbewerb." Freiheit.Org Impulspapier, (2022). https://shop.freiheit.org/#!/Publikation/1280.

15 'Strategic culture' is here meant as a socially accepted and widespread discourse on security and defence issues among political, academic and also military circles, including the wider public, in order to create a common threat perception and initiate participation.

16 As opposed to an overambitious multilateralism as in Patrick Morgan's analysis of collective actor deterrence. According to Morgan, collective actor deterrence aims at imposing important change in the international context, therefore exceeding its original scope of preventing war to break out. It is deemed too slow in taking action and allows for disagreement among its members – especially on whether or not force should be used – which in turn prevents deterrence. Morgan, Patrick M. 2012. "The State of Deterrence in International Politics Today". Contemporary Security Policy 3(1), 85-107.

17 See Jervis, Robert. 1979. "Deterrence Theory Revisited". World Politics 31 (2). Cambridge University Press: 289-324. doi: 1 0.2307/2009945.

nuclear deterrence (notional defence) and **resilience** (structural and societal resistance).

Conventional deterrence – direct defence

Conventional deterrence centres on military capabilities and force structures ready to engage in a direct war effort. Unlike nuclear deterrence, conventional deterrence considers the likelihood of a direct military-to-military engagement. Preventing conflict is subject to a credibly strong force, which is prepared to actively engage if necessary. During the Cold War and in the immediate aftermath, NATO considered the conventional force of the Soviet Union decidedly more capable than that of NATO and its partners. Efforts to match the Soviet force were deemed untenable; instead, the rearmament of (West) Germany and military build-up in Europe was meant to be capable to withstand a targeted offence from the Soviet side, not to prevent a full-scale attack. This task resided with the nuclear deterrence posture of NATO. Conventional deterrence should credibly convince that an attack was halted enough to allow for a severe response via tactical nuclear weapons.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, this scenario – the necessity to be able to counter an attack on NATO territory even for a short period – faded, and with it, the necessity for conventional deterrence.

Nuclear deterrence – notional defence

Nuclear deterrence is the most prominent category of deterrence, that of a threat of serious retaliation. Infamous throughout the Cold War, nuclear deterrence formed a vital part in the MAD doctrine (*Mutually Assured Destruction*).[18]Über die MAD-Doktrin und die nukleare Abschreckungshaltung des Kalten Krieges hinaus hält die NATO auch heute noch an der nuklearen Abschreckung als einem zentralen Aspekt ihrer Verteidigung fest:

> *"Nuclear weapons are a core component of NATO's overall capabilities for deterrence and defence, alongside conventional and missile defence forces. […] The fundamental purpose of NATO's nuclear capability is to preserve peace, prevent coercion and deter aggression. As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance. NATO's goal is a safer world for all; the Alliance seeks to create the security environment for a world without nuclear weapons."*[19]

Nuclear deterrence is less tangible than conventional deterrence, which makes it more susceptible to criticism. Because of its massive destructive potential, civil society organizations and many non-nuclear countries strongly condemn the sheer existence of nuclear weapons. In addition, the assumption that nuclear deterrence would only work if all actors act equally rational continues to provoke controversy. Arguably, the rationality of many political leaders is questionable. However, the power of a nuclear threat is so great that it involves many more than just two actors (aggressor and receiver). When Russian President Putin threatened to use nuclear weapons, it was not just Ukraine or the United States or European countries that reacted to it, but even Putin's ally of sorts China's President Yi Jinping warned explicitly against the use of nuclear arms against Ukraine. The power and the danger of nuclear weapons are well known, which makes their possession both wanted and feared.

Today, there are seven overt nuclear powers (the US, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Great Britain, France), one covert nuclear power (Israel), and at least three nuclear aspirants (Iran, North Korea and Syria), "making the nuclear phenomenon more global than ever.[20] Through so-called nuclear sharing, Germany participates in the planning and the use of weapons by NATO as well, alongside Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey. While it is indispensable to further global efforts to reduce nuclear weapons and to halt their proliferation, it would be foolish to assume one country could lead by example, abolish its nuclear weapons and thus create a snowball effect among its fellow nuclear partners. There is no indication that Russia or China or Pakistan or India would follow such lead, even if the United States were to initiate the move.

Resilience – resistance

Somewhat new in the discussion on deterrence is resilience. A buzzword of the past two decades in particular, resilience in international politics as it relates to security provision of the Western Alliance is anchored in NATO Article 3:

> *"In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, all Parties, separately and jointly, […] will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack."*

Essentially, resilience in security and defence politics refers to the ability of a state to resist and recover from an attack. Resilience thus feeds into deterrence by denial, or the classic conventional deterrence posture. Resilience has a clear military as well as a civilian component, which complicates coordination and task division of its implementation. To NATO, resilience is a national responsibility contributing to shared collective defence. Although resilience has been part of security considerations since the inception of NATO, the concept remained vague and subject to national interpretations. While during the Cold War, the civil component – civil preparedness, or civil emergency planning – was "well orga-

18 See Jervis, Robert. „Mutual Assured Destruction." Foreign Policy, no. 133 (2002): 40-42. https://doi.org/10.2307/3183553.
19 „NATO'S Nuclear Deterrence Policy and Forces." NATO. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, July 6, 2022. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50068.htm.
20 See Delpech, Thérèse . 2012. Nuclear Deterrence in the 21st Century: Lessons from the Cold War for a New Era of Strategic Piracy. Rand Corporation. ISBN 0833059440, 9780833059444 p.3.

nised and resourced by Allies, and was reflected in NATO's organisation and command structure"[21]. this effort was significantly reduced after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This trend reversed only when Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 and the terror organization ISIS/Daesh rose, with activities reaching well into the Alliance's territory. It became clear that to withstand external threats, modern societies need resilient civil structures, resources and services.[22]

Because in the past eight years in particular, the geopolitical environment worldwide and the security landscape in Europe has increasingly exhibited vulnerabilities, heads of state within NATO have decided to further develop the concept of resilience to include tangible measurements and responsibilities. Next to specific areas for coordination and cooperation, such as cyber defence, hybrid threats and civil-military cooperation, NATO defined so-called baseline requirements. At the Warsaw Summit in 2016, recognizing the significance of resilience as a basis for a credible deterrence and defence, NATO member states agreed on seven such baseline requirements:

(1) assured continuity of government and critical government services;

(2) resilient energy supplies;

(3) the ability to deal effectively with the uncontrolled movement of people;

(4) resilient food and water resources;

(5) the ability to deal with mass casualties;

(6) resilient communications systems;

(7) resilient transportation systems.

NATO heads of government reiterated the commitment to those requirements at the Brussels Summit in 2021. In the NATO 2030 Agenda, eight pillars of resilience were proposed: internal resilience (solidarity within the Alliance), societal resilience, democratic resilience (in terms of institutional resistance), climate resilience (especially early warning and reconstruction after climate disasters), defence spectrum resilience (adaptability to changing security requirements), critical infrastructure protection and resilience, economic resilience and resilience in relation to the use of space. Also, the initiative to establish a yet to be further defined 'internal resilience barometer' to evaluate progress in these requirements was introduced.[23] At the NATO Summit in Madrid in June 2022, NATO declared resilience as being the first line of deterrence and defence. According to NATO, "strengthening the capacity of societies to prepare for, respond to, recover from and adapt to the full range of threats and hazards.[24]

forms a key component of its defence posture. Thus, in October 2022, NATO established a Resilience Committee as a senior NATO advisory body for resilience and civil preparedness.[25]

Overall, it seems that especially the civil-military coordination and the translation into national policies is still in its infancy. Also, resilience is not sought to make an attack bounce off similar to a defensive shield. Rather, building resilience refers to introducing coping mechanisms and quick alternative solutions to deal with the effects of a potential attack. How to increase resilience and involve the civil society more in the task to providing security still needs work.

The bottom line is: Deterrence equals a fully equipped military or capabilities that are fully covered by the Alliance, a well-informed public and redundancies and decentralised government services and resources providing secure lines of communication and supplies of energy, food, etc. Nuclear deterrence is a reality of today's geopolitics and its role will not fade in the near future. Unless there is a horrific accident or deliberate use of a nuclear capability, there will not be much change in the fact that nuclear weapons continue fulfil a special function in security policies. This is especially true for aspiring powers and autocratic regimes, which is why democratic countries cannot unilaterally dispense with this technology. Conventional deterrence needs to become a stronger pillar in European security and defence to back the nuclear deterrent and diminish its role.

1.3 How to deter? The credibility component

Ultimately, deterrence is based on one component: credibility. Own capacities to defend against an external threat need to be believable to really deter a potential adversary to attack, and risks need to be credibly communicated to the society so that the public is willing to invest necessary resources.

Deterrence is provided through a credibly capable military, through a credible political response package to specific action violating the rules-based order established by the UN, a credible nuclear deterrence posture, resilient infrastructure and societal resilience. It is not enough to possess certain capabilities in quantity and quality, the willingness to pull the trigger, to use those capabilities – be it military or economic sanction packages – is decisive.

Most NATO member states are not able to defend their own territories alone. This is the very reason NATO came into being and the reason why it continued to exist and operate well beyond the end of the Cold War. Today, with the European Union, the coordination of efforts to increase security

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21 See Roepke, Wolf-Diether, and Hasit Thankey. „Resilience: The First Line of Defence." NATO. February, 2019.
    https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2019/02/27/resilience-the-first-line-of-defence/index.html.
22 Ibid.
23 See the NATO 2030 Young Leaders Report. February 2021. "NATO 2030: Embrace the change, guard the values".
    https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/2/pdf/210204-NATO2030-YoungLeadersReport.pdf
24 See NATO, Deterrence and defence, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_133127.htm. Accessed 01.12.2022.
25 See NATO, Resilience Committee, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50093.htm, Accessed 14.12.2022.

and defence has received further institutional setups that have the potential to combine efforts and thus add efficiency to NATO.

A strong deterrence is achieved through closer coordination, quicker decision-making on the national level, joint procurement and technological development efforts and, a broader security and defence education that includes civil society.[26] Most importantly, however, is to answer the question what and who is to be deterred, and what would deter the respective actor. With regard to the current Russian war against Ukraine, Europeans and Germany in particular do not agree on what deters Russia, and how to achieve deterrence. Is it about deterring Russia to attack other European countries? Deterring Russia from further attacking Ukraine? What is the difference between defeating Russia and enabling Ukraine to prevail? This strategic debate needs to be nurtured in Germany again.

Credibility of deterrence comes with a changed attitude and a changed narrative: positive messaging of successful national procurement efforts, reporting on successful NATO exercises, continued and unabated military support to Ukraine, a strong rhetoric on values and sanctioning of violations of international law on the international political arena.

3. Conclusion

In 2022, by ordering a fully-scale attack on Ukraine, the Russian government returned war to Europe. No mutual defence pledge existed for Ukraine and the nuclear umbrella of NATO did not cover Ukraine. Still, the Western Alliance thought their rhetoric alone would deter Russia from attacking. Evidently, deterrence – or extended deterrence – did not work. Arguably, the reaction of NATO and European partners to this war is closely monitored by other nations worldwide; powers like China, gauging Western responses to regional conflict, or partners like Taiwan and others fearing territorial claims by neighbouring powers. While China certainly assesses the Western response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in order to incorporate that assessment in its own strategic planning vis-à-vis potential further territorial claims, smaller nations evaluate whether Europe and the Western Alliance is a reliable security partner. In both cases, the deterrence posture of NATO and European partners plays a decisive role. And for the survival of democracies, it is paramount how the Western Alliance and Europe support Ukraine against the Russian invasion. This entails financial aid inasmuch as military assistance.

What is needed in Germany and in wider Europe is a strong strategic culture. This means a participatory shaping of security policy, which includes public debate and a comprehensive exchange between academia, policy-makers and the military. While some countries like Finland or the Baltics already have a strong involvement of the public in security considerations, Germany and other, especially central and western European countries will benefit from closer incorporating the public in strategic discussions concerning the military and civil preparedness, i.e. resilience. Any citizen should be informed about potential security risks and options for action taking, from cyber issues and disinformation, environmental dangers, small-scale attacks on critical infrastructure to a direct territorial attack.

Deterrence should be adapted to the national and European level. While NATO already identifies the national responsibility for fostering resilience, deterrence as such should enter national considerations beyond the ministerial level. Deterrence is no panacea. However, developing a deterrence strategy alone, and assuming ownership within it, increases the defence capabilities of democracies and reduces surprise.

Misinformation about terms such as 'militarization' and the lack of a constructive discourse of the implications of weapons deliveries to a state at war – to take a current example – is slowing down progress in important political decisions. Germany needs to seriously invest in deterrence and resilience measures. This includes military equipment, from individual gear to tanks, ships and fighter jets, just as much as education of the general public and critical infrastructure investments, from energy grids to water supply and telecommunication. The 100 billion Euro special funds for the German Armed Forces agreed on in 2022 is a good start, albeit a drop in the bucket. Much more of it is needed, including a higher invest in the long-term national defence budget.

In Germany, the narrative of security, defence and deterrence needs changing. Investing in deterrence does not mean infinite armament and a militarization of society and government. Educating on threats and means to address risks does not lead to a securitization of society, but enables and empowers society to decide and act informed in any emerging crisis.

Democracy needs defending. And Germany and Europe need to seriously invest in deterrence and defence.

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26 Zum Thema sicherheitspolitische Bildung ist Anfang 2023 eine Studie mit der Bundeswehruniversität in München veröffentlicht worden. Siehe Pietraß, Manuela, Januar 2023. Friedens- und Sicherheitspolitische Bildung an Schulen. https://shop.freiheit.org/#!/Publikation/1428.

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